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Romanian experiences of primary school teachers on school counseling

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Abstract

Being relative a recent field into the New Romanian Curriculum, the object Counseling and Guidance Area is been reflected in different manners into educational practice. This paper is elaborated as a case-study on content analyze of 56 school counseling programs to investigate the educational approaches of teachers from primary school level regarding this school object. The results reflect teachers' confusing ideas about what should be approached through this school object. Future trainings should be focus on the necessity of designing some general frameworks for school counseling activities correlated to the specific objectives and some methodological suggestions on issues approached.

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Keywords: School counseling; primary level; educational approaches; content analysis.

1. Short introduction

Education reform had among many results the introduction of curricular area called Counseling and Career Guidance, following a reassessment of the educational counseling and career guidance importance into school. In primary education, Counseling and Career Guidance Area is focused on school's formative role, especially its role on development of the child, and school counselor is interested in those aspects of student development that lead to its identity and it empowers the decision-making.

2. Purpose and methodology of the case-study

Because the object Counseling and Career Guidance is been reflected in different manners into educational practice, there was elaborated a case study on content analyze of 56 school counseling programs from primary level. The purpose of this case study was to investigate the educational approaches of teachers from primary school level regarding this school object. So, the method used was content analysis of a total of 56 curricula for Counseling and Career Guidance discipline, programs developed by teachers from six counties (21 programs from Iași County; 6 programs from Neamț County; 9 programs from Bacau County; 5 from Botosani County; 7 from Vaslui County; and

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8 from Vrancea County). Note that the small number of programs reviewed is because teachers have avoided choosing this subject for the following reasons: lack of specialized literature or access to such references, the absence or insufficient training in this area, insufficient information about counseling area among teachers and parents, lack of material resources, requiring a certain optional subjects. Through content analysis there were investigated four components: 1) framework objectives; 2) benchmarks; 3) topics, and 4) methods. Each component was analyzed after certain criteria, as follows:

for the framework objectives: correlation with subject, proper wording, suitability on age level of class;

for the benchmarks: consistency with the framework objectives;

for the thematic component: compliance with Counseling and Career Guidance Area; compliance with the framework objectives and their benchmarks, and the number of suggested activities;

for the methods proposed: type and number of used methods.

The content analysis of Counseling and Career Guidance programs was carried out for each primary class level. Thus, there were analyzed 18 programs for the first level, 7 programs for the second level, 9 programs for the third level, and 22 programs for the fourth level.

3. Results

3.1.1. 1st Component: Framework objectives

criteria: 1) correlation with subject; 2) proper wording, 3) suitability on age level of class.

Analyzing the framework objectives, it showed that 89% of the 56 programs are not related on field of Counseling and Career Guidance. Also, a percentage of 82% of the framework objectives were incorrectly conceived. And a percentage of 56% of those programs weren't adequate to the age level for which they were proposed. Examples of framework objectives formulated incorrectly or inappropriate to age level:

1st Level: Revolving some personality development problems/Knowledge and respect of traffic rules/ Development of a behavior for promotion of mental health;

2nd Level: Training and development for a positive attitude over the environment/Development and expression of a correct attitude regarding private hygiene;

3rd Level: Ability training to identify quality of products/Develop the perception on cultural values/ Ability development to achieve educational plans;

4th Level: Develop the ability regarding fire protection/Networking between team members/Learning a career planning/Develop capacity to prevent negative affectivity/Training and developing the ability to identify the pressure group.

3.1.2. 2nd Component: Benchmarks

Analysis criteria: consistency with the framework objectives

Analysis of benchmarks showed that most were not designed in accordance with the framework objectives. As can be seen in the next examples of benchmarks, there are a lot of mistakes, like inadequacy with framework objectives, or incorrectly conceiving, and discrepancy regarding the age of pupils.

1st Level: Framework objective: Psychological and educational knowledge of pupils;

Benchmark: to learn how to maintain private hygiene.

2nd Level: Framework objective: Developing self-awareness;

Benchmark: to manage effectively the group needs.

3rd Level: Framework objective: Develop the capacity for knowledge and self-knowledge;

Benchmark: to have a clear picture on the professional occupations.

4th Level: Framework objective: Developing personal strategies to avoid underachievement;

Benchmark: to accept and respect the rules of conduct generally available.

3.1.3. 3rd Component: Topics

Analysis criteria: 1) compliance with Counseling and Career Guidance Area; 2) compliance with the framework objectives and their benchmarks, and 3) the number of suggested activities.

Analyzing the thematic register, the investigation revealed a confusion of 84% percentage of teachers regarding specific thematic area of school counseling and on combining various topics of compulsory and optional subjects in

primary school, such as Children's literature, Civic education, Education for democracy. Other examples for each level of class:

1st Level: How to cross the streets?/Healthy food/Cleaning around us

2nd Level: Alphabet road/Fire prevention rules

3rd Level: The future of planet starts with us/Sports/Treasures of nature

4th Level: Customs and traditions of my county/Famous Biography

Looking into all analyzed programs, most of them have discrepancy between certain topics, framework objectives and benchmarks, such as:

1st Level: Framework objective: Developing communication skills

Benchmark: to recognize elements of personality development

Topic: Why come to school?

2nd Level: Framework objective: Initiating pupils into conflict situations management

Benchmark: to decrease negative communication into the group of students

Topic: The parent' role

3rd Level: Framework objective: Developing skills of self-knowledge on abilities

Benchmark: to participate through methods of self-knowledge

Topic: Communication

4th Level: Framework objective: Developing the decision-making ability

Benchmark: to apply decision-making skills

Topic: How to respect the good-manners

From all 56 programs, we consider that in 54 cases the number of activities assigned to conduct a specific topic was higher or lower than necessary, and, also, it was inadequate to the age level of pupils, such as for the:

1st Level: Self-knowledge – 2 activities; Let us know – 1 activity;

2nd Level: Conflict resolution – 1 activity; Our Rules – 8 activities;

3rd Level: Conflict Resolution – 1 activity; Communication – 2 activities;

4th Level: Communication Barriers – 8 activities; Professions of the future – 2 activities.

1.1.1.1. 4th Component: Proposed methods

Analysis criteria: 1) type, and 2) number

Last component analyzed, the proposed methods for carrying out activities points out that most activities are based only on a few specific methods of school counseling.

1st Level: a rate of 86% percent of programs analyzed is occupied by the use of only two methods: problem solving and role play.

2nd Level: a rate of 92% is represented by the using of role play, completing the worksheets and making collages, prints, posters, and drawings.

3rd Level: a rate of 85% is allocated to expository methods, description, conversation, lecture, and brainstorming. Interestingly, some of the most effective methods in school counseling activities, such as playful leisure activities, transpose to the situation, arguments and so on do not appear at all mentioned in those programs.

4th Level: a rate of 56% of the programs examined contained no specific method school counseling activities, only in 12% of programs was identified solving problems method; in 44% of programs was specified method of debate, in 27% of programs was proposed role play method, and in 48% of programs were present learning exercises.

2. Conclusions

Regarding framework objectives component reported to each level of primary education, most programs contain many targets which are not correlated with field of school counseling. Also, some framework objectives are incorrectly conceived, and others presents discrepancy between content and age level for which they were proposed.

Concerning the benchmarks, there have been found that most programs reviewed have been included benchmarks that were not in compliance with the framework objectives.

On thematic register in all investigated programs were identified inconsistencies between subject, framework objectives and benchmarks.

Looking at the proposed activities for each topic, in all reviewed programs were found situations where the allocated number was too high or too low in relation to the subject.

Analyzing methods component, it was found that only a few proposed methods have been specific to school counseling activities.

Therefore, we conclude that the analyzing results of the school counseling programs reflect the confusing ideas of primary school teachers about the counseling area into school curricula and what should be done into this school object. The results of this research emphasizes preparation for school counseling activities, general orientation frameworks aimed at specific objectives of the topic of methodological advice and suggestions on the themes according to level and goals.

Future trainings should be focus on the necessity of designing some general frameworks for the school counseling activities correlated to the specific objectives of this area and some methodological suggestions on issues approached. With reference to the results of this research, we consider it useful that specialists on counseling should focus on teacher training for school counseling activities. Also, there should be teach at least general approaches aimed to some particular targets subject of detailed school counseling and suggestions on specific issues or topics depending on the class level, purpose and objectives.

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